

MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

To: North 40 Advisory Committee

From: Wendie R. Rooney, Director of Community Development

Subject: Transmittal of Specific Plan Primer and North 40 Specific Plan Alternative Approaches

Date: October 27, 2011

Attached are two documents that we recommend you review before the November 3, 2011, North 40 Advisory Committee Meeting. The first document, entitled "Specific Plan Primer," is an excerpt from *A Planner's Guide to Specific Plans*, a paper prepared by the State of California Office of Planning and Research. It provides a good foundation on the use of specific plans, attributes and disadvantages, and a summary of the statutory requirements.

The second document is entitled "North 40 Specific Plan Alternative Approaches," and outlines various approaches the Town can use in developing the North 40 Specific Plan. Please note that although the document outlines three approaches, there are many forms between the two bookends (High Level of Detail) and (General Level of Detail). Staff recommends the Medium Level of Detail approach since this type of plan would provide a good degree of specificity for both the Town and the future developer of the property, as well as maintain the Town's authority over subsequent development review (Architecture and Site, Conditional Use Permits, and subdivisions) when projects are submitted. These approaches will be discussed at the November 3, 2011, Advisory Committee meeting.

Please feel free to contact Joel Paulson or me if you have any questions. See you next Thursday!

Attachments

1. Specific Plan Primer
2. North 40 Specific Plan Alternative Approaches

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Specific Plan Primer

(Excerpts from the A Planner's Guide To Specific Plans)

A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the general plan. It effectively establishes a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area. A specific plan may be as general as setting forth broad policy concepts, or as detailed as providing direction to every facet of development from the type, location and intensity of uses to the design and capacity of infrastructure; from the resources used to finance public improvements to the design guidelines of a subdivision.

A specific plan may encompass a very large area or as small as a single acre. A specific plan may be developed in response to a single policy issue, or to address each applicable policy of the general plan. It may also diverge from the issues contained in the general plan into other subjects viewed by the community as being of relevance.

To an extent, the range of issues that is contained in a specific plan is left to the discretion of the decision-making body. However, all specific plans, whether prepared by a general law city or county, must comply with Sections 65450 - 65457 of the Government Code. These provisions require that a specific plan be consistent with the adopted general plan of the jurisdiction within which it is located. In turn, all subsequent subdivision and development, all public works projects and zoning regulations must be consistent with the specific plan.

The initiation of the specific plan process may be motivated by any number of factors including development issues or the efforts of private property owners, elected officials, citizen groups, or the local planning agency. As with a general plan, the authority for adoption of the specific plan is vested with the local legislative body.

The adoption of a specific plan is a legislative act similar to adoption of a general plan or zoning ordinance.

Specific Plan Attributes & Disadvantages

A thorough specific plan can enable communities to effectively implement selected long term general plan objectives in a short time frame. The enabling statutes are flexible, allowing public agencies to create standards for the development of a wide range of projects or solutions to any type of land use issues. The plan may present the land use and design regulations which guide the development of a particular area or incorporate land use and zoning regulations, infrastructure plans, and development approval processes for the development for subsequent projects. The plan may be organized into a concise set of development policies and include land use regulations, a capital improvement program, or financing program within a single document.

Policies of the general plan which are specific to financing infrastructure improvements and extensions, or cost recovery programs may be implemented by matching land uses with supporting public facilities. This is done to assist engineering departments and developers avoid

ineffective or undersized streets, sewers, water lines, and other necessary improvements. In addition, it may directly impose exactions in association with the general plan's capital improvement policies.

The specific plan process must provide opportunities for the general public, as well as residents located within planning areas, to assist in the planning of their particular communities. Public involvement helps define the community's vision of future growth and development.

Future development proposals may benefit from the foundation created by the specific plan. For example, a Program EIR adopted to fulfill the plan's CEQA obligation may streamline the processing of subsequent discretionary projects by obviating the need for additional environmental documentation.

The specific plan represents a good tool for developing a community "sense of place." A creative and innovative specific plan may bridge-the-gap between monotonous urban development and a livable neighborhood.

The specific plan also has disadvantages. These include the time, cost, and obligation of staff resources. To be effective, the plan requires the collection and analysis of significant amounts of detailed data. Since most planning agencies do not have the staff to commit to the preparation process, most plans include the involvement and cost of outside consultants. Similarly, the incorporation of the plan into the day to day planning processes may require the commitment of additional staff time, particularly when the plan establishes regulations which are only applicable to the area affected by the plan.

The adoption of a specific plan does not vest development by statute, but its entitlements may be defined by development agreements and vesting tentative maps. Specific plans themselves are dynamic documents and may be subject to change. There are no assurances to residents and project proponents that the plan will not be subject to future revisions.

Statutory Requirements

Section 65451 of the Government Code mandates that a specific plan contain:

(a) A specific plan shall include a text and a diagram or diagrams which specify all of the following in detail:

(1) The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.

(2) The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.

(3) Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable.

(4) A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs (1), (2), and (3).

(b) The specific plan shall include a statement of the relationship of the specific plan to the general plan.

North 40 Specific Plan Alternative Approaches

Specific Plan (SP) Elements:

- A. Introduction, background, and relationship to Town documents
- B. Vision
- C. Land use
- D. Development standards
- E. Circulation/Mobility
- F. Infrastructure and public facilities
- G. Implementation
- H. Administration

The degree of detail for each of these elements can differ in a specific plan depending on the desired level of specificity. Additional elements/sections such as design guidelines, sustainability concepts, conceptual site plans, and landscaping can also add specificity to the SP document. Below we have outlined three ways to approach a SP: (1) with a high level of detail and less subsequent project review; (2) with a medium level of detail with greater subsequent project review or (3) with a general level of detail and substantial subsequent project review. Our recommendation is to draft a SP with a “medium level” of detail that clearly outlines the vision, goals, and process for future development submittals (e.g., what types of projects will require Planning Commission and/or Council approval). The following outlines each of these approaches and includes the key advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Specific Plan with High Level of Detail (similar to a planned development [PD])

Includes the elements listed under standard Specific Plan above, as well as:

- A. Vision
 - Vision description, illustrations, images
- B. Land uses:
 - Ranges of number of residential units
 - Ranges of square footages per use
 - Height maximums (can customize per district, per use, per location)
- C. Detailed site plan
 - Street design and locations
 - Building footprints
 - Landscaping plan
- D. Architectural building elevations
- E. Development standards (heights, setbacks, percentage of open space, etc.)

Advantages

- Comprehensively planned (more assurance that the vision and “sense of place” will be implemented).
- Town and Council know what to expect.
- The Planning Commission and Council that conceived the plan would implement the plan consistent with the intended vision.
- A developer knows what to expect.
- Studies the impacts through the EIR process, may not need additional environmental analysis for each future application.
- The technical analysis thoroughly analyzes the ultimate development project; consequently, the Town knows in advance the development project’s potential impacts and necessary mitigation.
- Allows for a detailed phasing plan.

Disadvantages

- Need a developer to control all/most land.
- Difficult to finance (a lot of time and budget for architecture before zoning is approved).
- More time intensive at the SP development process.
- Requires a SP amendment each time buildings change; however, the SP can include various levels of review that correspond to the level of changes, e.g., a minor SP amendment (DRC or Planning Commission review) and a major SP amendment with Planning Commission and Town Council review.

Specific Plan with Medium Level of Detail

Includes the elements listed under standard Specific Plan above, as well as:

- A. Vision
 - Vision description, illustrations, images
- B. Land uses:
 - Ranges of number of residential units
 - Ranges of square footages per use
 - Height maximums (can customize per district, per use, per location)
- C. Development standards (can customize per district, per use, per location)
- D. Architectural design guidelines
- E. Conceptual street designs and locations

Advantages

- Comprehensively planned (more assurance that the vision and “sense of place” will be implemented).
- Gives Town and Council control for important aspects such as height and density.
- Gives future landowners and developers a defined framework for applications.
- Not too detailed, so does not have to be amended for each small building change.
- Studies the impacts through the EIR process and may not need additional environmental analysis for each future application.
- Provides architecture guidance and heights parameters but allows for future review with development submittals.

Disadvantages

- More time intensive at the SP development process. Need to set development parameters now (height, setbacks, commercial square footage, density, number of residential units).
- May require a SP amendment each time buildings change; however, the SP can include various levels of review that correspond to the level of changes, e.g., a minor SP amendment (DRC or Planning Commission review) and a major SP amendment with Planning Commission and Town Council review.

Specific Plan with General Level of Detail

Including:

- A. Goals and policies
- B. Vision statement
- C. Land use map
- D. Land use (max units and square footages allowed)
- E. General design standards and guidelines

Advantages

- Faster and less expensive.
- Defers significant Town Council and community dialogues on the SP to future phases of development or project application.

Disadvantages

- Piecemeal development may occur.
- Will require separate Planned Development applications for each subsequent phase of development.
- Difficult to create "sense of place" due to piecemeal approach.
- May need to do supplemental environmental analysis on future development.
- Less teeth/control in the document (less assurance of end results).
- Less clarity for the Town Council and Community at the front end.
- Less clarity for future developers.
- Due to the minimal amount of SP detail, full potential impacts (and required mitigation) may not be known until each development phase is proposed.
- Limited ability to control phasing.

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